

A
LETTER

FROM

A Friend in the Country,

TO HIS

Friend in *London*.



L O N D O N,
Printed in the Year MDCCXVII.

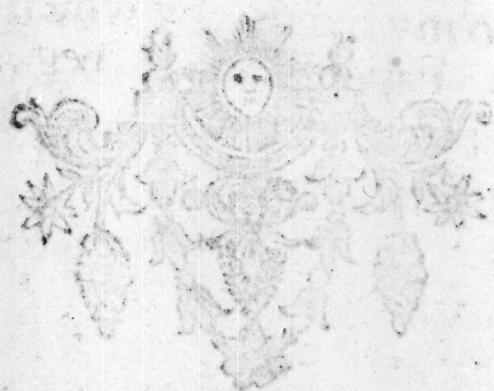
LETTER

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Friend in London



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S I R,

YOUR last *Friendly Epistle* is received, and I heartily thank you for it. In answer thereto, I send this; and if you should wonder, how I came to hit on such a Subject, to prevent a Surprize on that Account, I beg leave to tell you, that a few Days since (by Accident) some Printed || Sheets came to my hands, by which I perceive that a Paper-War is begun amongst some of your Friends, and the vigorous Heat by which 'tis carried on, affords Cause to fear, that an *Evil Spirit* is breaking in on the happy Repose of your People. For tho' some particular Men are more especially struck at in these *Satyr*s, yet if we consider the Station in which they act amongst you, the Peace of the whole must be in danger,

|| *A Character. A Character defended. A Letter to the Author of the Character. A Return to the Letter, &c.*

unless a timely Check is put to such Proceedings.

The Letter to the Author of the Character is written in a much softer Stile than the other Sheets are ; but yet I am of Opinion, that all such Publications are blameable ; for as Christians we are directed to study to be quiet, whereas this way of Printing, one against another, serves only to gratify an evil Disposition, and can tend to no other end than creating Heats, and Feuds amongst Brethren, and so banish Friendship and Brotherly Love from all Christian Societies.

I heartily wish that the Persons who have ventur'd on these dangerous Experiments would give themselves time to cool, and then consider, what bad Effects such Causes must produce. To rob a Brother of his good Name is a Crime very heinous in the Eye of God and Man ; and therefore we ought to be very careful to avoid every such Practice our selves, and do all we can to prevent it in others.

In

In the Papers before mentioned, *three* of your || *Teachers* are represented in very dark Colours; and all this is done on purpose to set the Body of your People against them, that they may be remov'd from the Ministry.

All that the Author says against these Persons, he delivers in a very warm and angry manner, and yet he assures his Readers, that this is done only for the sake of TRUTH. To advance this, he reproaches your Ministers, and warns the Friends to *fly from them*; and for this he comes forth with what he calls a Godly Rage against G-----n especially, forgetting, or at least not observing, that the *Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God*; and that the Lord hath said, * *Vengeance is mine, I will repay it.*

'Tis very certain, that TRUTH can never prosper by such Measures, but rather is like to suffer by them. Nothing can be more injurious to Christianity than for those who profess it to be angry with, and abusive one to the o-

ther. Such *Wars and Fightings* as these spring from *the Lusts that war in us*, and so 'tis impossible Religion should gain any Credit or Reputation by them. The way to advance *Truth* is to love like Brethren, and in honour to prefer one another, to be meek and lowly, humble and condescending, and *laying aside*
 2 Pet. 2. 1, 2. *all Malice, and all Guile, and all Hypocrisy, and Envy, and all evil Speaking: As new-born Babes desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby.*

When I had read over these angry Papers, I was very much griev'd to find the Author so much out of Temper with his Friends, that he resolves to say as many hard things of them as he pleases, and finding him break forth with so much Bitterness on all their Characters, I begun to imagine that he was mistaken, and that he had not given a fair Representation of the Men. And that I might be able to make Judgment in this Affair, I have made it my business to come at a just Account

Account of the said Persons, and upon Inquiry I find this is said of them, ' That
 ' they are sober, honest, good Men,
 ' who have been, and still are approv'd
 ' in the Ministry by the Body of your
 ' People, whose Testimony they own,
 ' and receive with Pleasure ; That they
 ' use their best Endeavours to promote
 ' the Interest they are engaged in, for
 ' which they labour with all Diligence,
 ' as having nothing more at heart, than
 ' to establish their Friends in the Truth,
 ' and win others to the Love of it.

Now as this Account is very different from what the *Satyr* gives of these Brethren, so I am ready to conclude, 'tis the truest, as well as the best Representation of them, and I like it the better, because I have it from Persons of good Judgment, and unquestionable Integrity, who know the Men and their Communication. And as this appears to be the true Character of these Brethren, how much is our Author to blame for giving such a dark Account of them ? 'Tis pity that good Parts, and a bright

Genius should be engag'd on the side of Slander ; and if I were so fortunate as to know the Author, I should earnestly intreat him, to act more like a Man, than to wound his Neighbour's Reputation in such a covert way, and that he would show more of the Christian than to revile and speak evil of his Brethren.

As these Persons were admitted to the Work of the Ministry in a regular way, and the generality of your Friends are satisfied with them, 'tis hard that a single Person, or a few, should make themselves so uneasy, that nothing short of turning them from the Ministry will serve their turn ; and if this cannot be accomplish'd, bitter Satyr must stab their Reputations.

These things can never be the Fruit of the Wisdom from above, for as that is pure, so 'tis peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy, full of good Works. The Spirit of Truth can never be suppos'd to guide us in these rough and crooked Paths, for the

Fruit

Fruit of the Spirit is Love, and Peace, and the end of the Commandment is Charity, out of a pure Heart.

When your Friends come to be duly appriz'd of this Matter, they will certainly see it necessary, to do all they can to prevent these things from spreading any further ; for if this Spirit of Contention continues, the Consequences may appear in the end very destructive ; *If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

Solomon advises us to leave off Strife before 'tis meddled with : Certainly then it becomes us to stop it, as soon as we see 'tis beginning to show it self ; and if we have any regard to our selves, or the Peace of our Brethren, we shall use our best Endeavours to quench the Fire of Contention, and encourage Peace and Unity amongst Christians.

The way to grow in Grace is to love our Brethren with a true Heart fervently, endeavouring to be like-minded, to forbear, and forgive one another, as
God

God for Christ's sake forgives us, and by such Methods as these we may hope to arrive at Perfection. For next to our Love to God, our Perfection consists in the Love of his People ; and hence it is, that Charity is said to be the Band of Perfection ; and we are directed to be of one Mind, to live in Love and Peace, in order to our being perfect. But if we have bitter Envyings (or bitter Zeal) one against another, we must not boast of our Knowledge, or lie against the Truth, in saying that's the way to promote it ; for nothing can more effectually tend to root out Religion from the World, than the creating Divisions amongst the Professors thereof. Hence St. *Paul* observes, that if any Man seems to be contentious, we have no such Rule, nor the Churches of God, for we are directed to walk in Love, to be of one Mind, and not to grieve nor offend one another ; and this is what the Apostle very warmly and affectionately perswades us to, *If there be therefore any*

Phil. 2. 1, 2, 3.

any Consolation in Christ ; if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies ; fulfill ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind. Let nothing be done thro' Strife or Vain-Glory, but in Lowliness of Mind let each esteem other better than himself.

If we desire Truth may flourish and thrive amongst Men, we must take Care to avoid unnatural Heats and Divisions, for a City divided against it self cannot stand. The Enemies to Piety know, how much the nourishing Peace and Brotherly Love tends to recommend Christianity to the World, and therefore they have always endeavoured to divide them, that their Ruin might more easily be effected. But when the Disciples were all of one Mind, then the Word of God grew amongst them, and the Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved.

Certain-

Certainly if the Persons who have begun this Method of shewing their Dislike to some of their Brethren, would give themselves the Liberty to reflect on these Things, their Anger must abate, and they'll grow better temper'd than to persist in such Practices, that are so very pernicious to the Truth, which they declare for.

Besides, these Things are the more to be reprov'd, as they break in upon the Rules of your People, settled by them, for preventing any Thing being Printed and Published, which might have any Tendency to prejudice their Interest, and therefore there ought to be the more speedy Care taken to prevent the Contagion from spreading any further.

Intreat your People to apply themselves to this Work, show them what sad Reflections may otherwise fall upon them, if the Enemies to all Truth and Holiness should lay hold of the reproachful Turns which abound in the *Satyr*s, they, who love neither God nor Religion, will sport themselves with these

these things, and rejoice to see you are divided, hoping thereby you'll work Ruin to your Cause: For these Methods are quite contrary to that Meekness and good Temper, that Harmony and Friendship, which has long been the Honour of your Perswasion, by these Bands you have been knit together, and are become a flourishing Interest, capable to serve one another, and make a considerable Figure in the World. Why should you lose this Honour and break these Bands? Exert your selves to preserve both, by putting out the present Flames, and establishing Peace and Concord in your Communities. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity!

Persons ought to consider, that by letting their Zeal run out so far as to exceed the Law of Charity, though it be on the Side of Truth, much Harm may be done thereby, even to the Cause they propose to serve, and it must be allow'd very dangerous to attempt the

Pro-

Promotion of Christianity, by loading the Characters of the Ministry with Reproach.

'Tis however no new Thing for Men to be mistaken, and Ministers to be misrepresented, and 'tis a Satisfaction to me to hear, that the Persons pointed at in the aforesaid Papers, are comfortably supported under these Trials. That the good Spirit by which they are guided and fitted for their Work, does fill them with Wisdom and Courage to pursue the same, and 'tis not to be question'd but that the same Divine Power will prosper their hearty Endeavours, and crown their Labours with Success, and make them capable to fulfil their Ministry with Joy. I hope they will not fail to approve themselves the Servants of the Lord, by being gentle, and remember, that as it is a Christian Duty, so there is more real Satisfaction of Mind in forgiving an Injury, than in striving to revenge it.

Sir,

Sir, I shall now draw to a Close, hoping my Design will atone for the Length of this Letter. And though I am not in every Respect one with you, yet as I have a true Love for all sincere Christians, so I have a particular Veneration for your Friends, and therefore I am the more earnest to entreat that you will regard what I have said, in Order to prevent the Evils that may attend all such Publications as are here complain'd of, and I shall not question a good End to these Things, if you engage in it. I know your clear Judgment and calm Reasoning, will challenge Regard from your Friends, and it will rejoyce me to hear, that the Spirit of Truth hath guided you to such Measures, as shall put an End to all Strife and Debate, and engage you to follow the Things that make for Peace, and whereby one may edify another, that so after we have spent our Days in the Service of God here, we may be made meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance

heritance with the Saints in Light.
This is, and will be, the hearty Prayer of,

SIR,

Enfield, Feb.
18. 1717.

Your most obliged Friend,

and

Humble Servant.